

YOUR WEEK IN CHINA'S CAPITAL

今日北京

## BEIJING TODAY

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## Made-in-China Failure Behind Toilet Seat Craze

The flood of tourists seeking appliances in Japan shows where China went wrong. **Page 4**



## City's Hukou Woes Inspire Migratory Birds

With public school not an option, thousands of kids are heading for Hebei. **Page 5**



## France Revs Up for Year's Culture Fest

Croisements is back with a new year of art, culture and music. **Page 6**



## Propaganda with a Soft Touch

With smiling characters and a soundtrack lifted from *Super Mario Bros 64*, this 2-minute propaganda video was aimed square at the heart of the '80s generation.

Designed by a Chaoyang animation studio and promoted by *The People's Daily*, the short made headlines after being shared by official channels on the eve of Spring Festival. **Page 3**

## Firework Sales Face a Chill

BY DIAO DIAO

After 10 extravagant years, Beijing is getting bored with fireworks. Sales records from the city's public fireworks vendors showed a sharp reduction in sales as of February 23.

The slowed sales followed a propaganda campaign designed to associate the festive explosives with the city's problematic litter and polluted air.

In one image circulated online, a husband and wife couple in sanitation uniforms pleaded for Beijingers to blast off fewer fireworks so they could spend the holiday with their families instead of sweeping the streets.

Local schools also advised students

that fireworks contribute to litter and amplify PM 2.5 pollution during Chinese New Year.

Unfortunately for vendors, the warnings were quite effective. Both fireworks stands and online retailers posted a sharp downturn in fireworks sales.

A vendor near Workers' Stadium, a hub for many fireworks sellers, said the city slashed 10 days from the 2015 fireworks sales period and prohibited steep discounts. The highest discount reported by any fireworks seller was 31 percent off.

Qianlong.com reported that there were 942 fireworks stands in the city

this year, a 10 percent decline from the number of fireworks sellers in 2014.

Online sales were also sluggish. The most popular fireworks on Nuomi.com sold only 14,000 units. More expensive fireworks sold less than 1,400.

Sanitation workers in Chaoyang District reported seeing fewer shells and paper on the ground this year.

The Beijing Environment Sanitation Engineering Group said Beijing has been seeing fewer and fewer fireworks during Spring Festival. As of February 20, the amount of firework shells sold totaled 30.2 tons, an 11.4-ton reduction from past years. ■

## CHINESE STOCK INDEXES

## SSE (Shanghai)

Close	Change	YTD
3,298.36	▲69.52 (2.15%)	+1.98%

## SZSE (Shenzhen)

Close	Change	YTD
11,750.78	▲211.08 (1.83%)	+6.68%

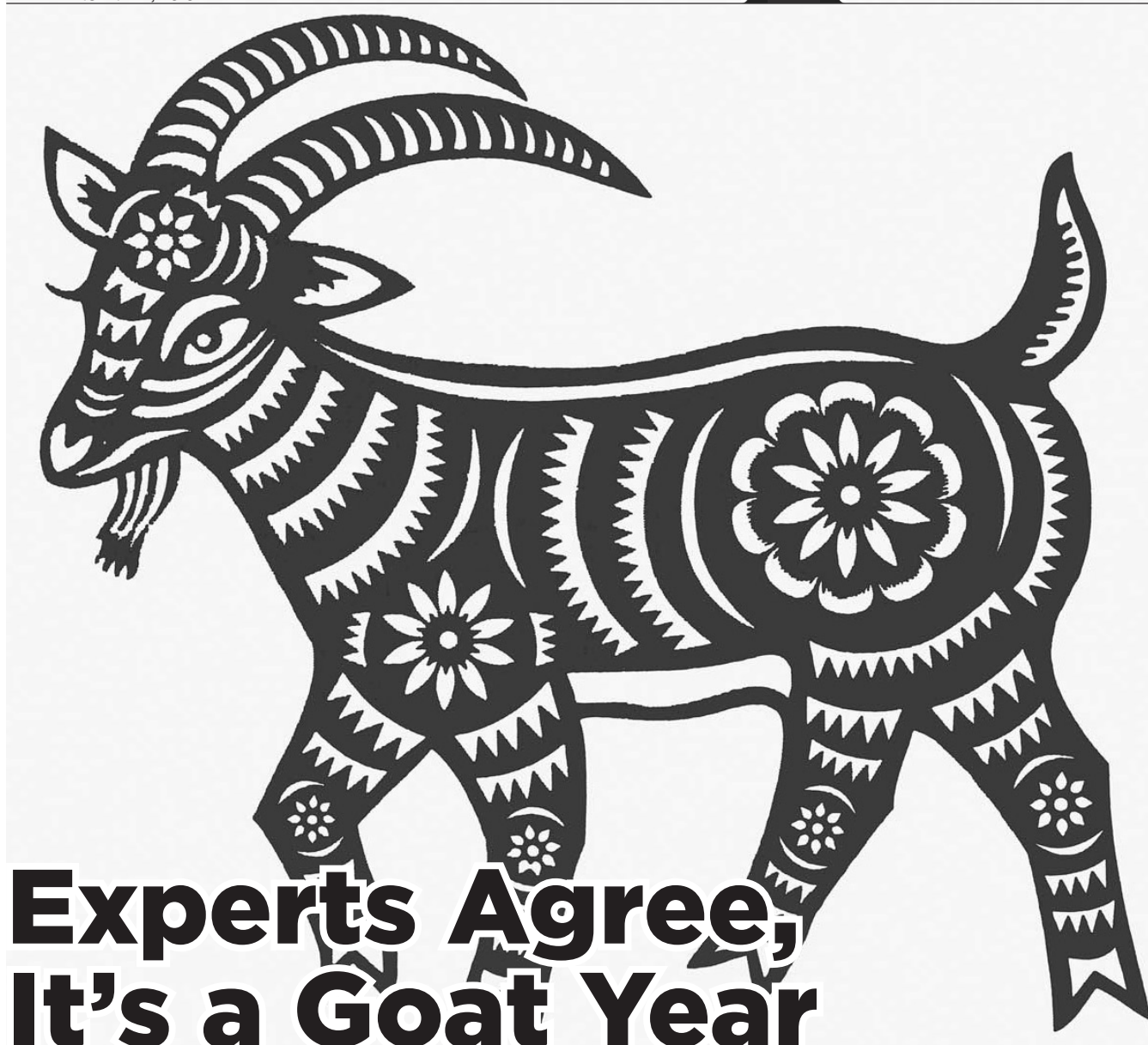
## HSI (Hong Kong)

Close	Change	YTD
24,902.06	▲123.78 (0.50%)	+5.53%

Accurate to market close on February 26, 2015







# Experts Agree, It's a Goat Year

Photo by CFP

BY DIAO DIAO

In the weeks before Chinese Spring Festival, foreign media were confounded by how to translate the latest animal in the Chinese zodiac cycle.

A media group in Manchester, UK was the first to raise the question. Then Birmingham followed when it attempted to wish the Chinese people a happy new year.

It didn't take long for American media to pick up on the controversy, with the *Wall Street Journal* throwing its weight behind "goat" and *USA Today* favoring "sheep."

For the *New York Times*, it was the

"Year of Any Ruminant, Horned Animal."

Just when most media groups were prepared to stick with goat as the official animal, China experts invited by foreign media caused further confusion. The tradition of animal years started from poorly documented sacrifice activities that may have involved goats or sheep, depending on whether one lived in south or north China.

Some suggested referring to the sculptures and paintings of the past for answers. Assuming the designers of the Old Summer Palace knew their animals, the bronze head for this year is

clearly a goat.

Wang Tao, a spokesman for the Nanjing Museum, noted that the oracle bone character for goat resembles a V and that goats have V-shaped horns. Goats also feature into antique pottery, with one porcelain vase from the Qing Dynasty in Chaotiangong Museum bearing three goats.

Xu Longmei, a research associate at Gan's Grand Courtyard, said the zodiac animals are a creation of the Han people of China's central plains. In ancient times, herders on the plains were more likely to be keeping goats than sheep. ■

## Tiger-Beating Clip Makes Xi China's First Cartoon President

BY LI RUIQI



Photo by China.com

On the eve of Chinese New Year, *The People's Daily* shared a clip on its official WeChat feed that featured an animated President Xi Jinping beating a tiger with a club.

With its peppy music borrowed from *Super Mario Bros 64*, the short cartoon went viral and attracted more than 2 million views in only four days.

For a country known for its slate-faced politicians, the transforming of Xi into a cartoon character marks a significant shift in propaganda strategy.

"This is a sign of political liberation for the Communist Party of China," said Xie Chuntao, dean of Party History at the Central Party School.

The cartoon was intended to lampoon the relationship between civilians and Chinese officials. While water is culturally a metaphor for civilians in Chinese history, the nation's often tyrannical bureaucrats were depicted as a fat layer of oil.

"The relationship between people and officials should be more like fish and

water: water remains water even if the fish die, but the fish can't survive without it," the clip said.

Xi's ongoing corruption battle is being positioned as a rectification movement. Aside from beating tigers, Xi is also seen waving a flag that reads Mass Line and snipping bands that separate public and private rights.

"The rectification movement must be implemented thoroughly or it will degrade into a temporary suppression of corrupt officials," the cartoon said.

It also lauded the achievements of Xi's corruption battle during the last year, where the closure of 2,000 government clubs created 300,000 homes for low-income families and the 53 billion yuan saved on official spending provided enough money to buy an aircraft carrier.

The video closed with a reminder that the Chinese Communist Party is supposed to be a Party of the people, by the people and for the people. The final scene showed as seal engraved with the character for "Power" locked inside a cage. ■

## Viewers Blast Spring Festival Gala's Attempt at 'Soft Power'

BY LI RUIQI



Photo by Zuodia.com

For foreigners, it can be hard to understand the staggering viewership of CCTV's Spring Festival Gala. The yearly program commanded 700 million eyeballs in 2014 and 690 million eyeballs this year, according to CNN.

That's more viewers than the Oscars, the Emmys, the *American Idol* finals, the MTV Music Awards and the Super Bowl combine, it said.

Two days after airing the gala, CCTV announced that more than 90 percent of all Chinese families tuned in to watch on the Lunar Eve.

But cold comments online suggest that CCTV's viewership comes less from popularity than from a captive audience.

"We simply have no alternative for anything to watch on the Lunar Eve. Every channel broadcasts CCTV's Spring Festival Gala," said a Sina Weibo user named alocarol.

Though iQiyi's online feed of the gala had 14 million viewers, most said they were there to read the sarcastic popup comments rather than watch the program.

The website received more than 100 million comments in the first 7 hours the gala was available.

Other critics noted the gala's shift to vulgar content and political grandstanding. Viewers complained that the lyrics of several songs sounded like canned adaptations of propaganda directives.

Hong Kong (CNN) said the gala was a sexist mess filled with grating skits that demeaned women. In one crosstalk segment called "Goddess and Tomboy," a man cruelly mocked his sister for being single in her late 20s and called her obese and ugly. While domestic media considered the anti-corruption skit "Hit on What You Like" a highlight of the year's show, CNN blasted the skit for insinuating that China's "female cadres" sleep their way to political advancement.

Overseas ratings increased significantly after CCTV sealed business deals with YouTube, Google and Twitter to reach out to a global audience with this year's Gala. It also rented a video billboard in New York's Time Square to plug the show.

"Such an aggressive push for Chinese soft power is new," says Tao Xie, a professor of International Studies at Beijing Foreign Studies University. ■



# Kuaidi and Didi Kiss and Make Up for V-Day

BY LYNNE WANG

**W**ith their brutal slugfest entering its third year, taxi app makers Didi and Kuaidi decided to bury the hatchet in a surprisingly romantic way: the two apps merged on Valentine's Day.

With an estimated market value of \$6 billion, the consolidated firm is expected to become one of the Top 10 Chinese IT giants during 2015.

The news comes only two months after business observers predicted Didi and Kuaidi would begin burning money in a new battle. Didi raised \$700 million from China Investment Corp, Temasek and Tencent in December, and Alibaba offered Kuaidi \$600 million in January.

"The primary reason for Didi and

Kuaidi's merger is to speed up the IPO process – especially before other players can get in on it," said Wang Ruchen, an independent analyst.

At the end of 2014, Didi and Kuaidi controlled 56.6 and 43.5 percent of the Chinese taxi booking market according to Analysys International. Thanks to aggressive marketing and promotion, each was available in more than 300 cities across the nation.

"The arrival of Uber and its collaboration with local IT firms like Baidu and Yidao threatened their market dominance," Wang said.

An editorial on *Huxiu Daily* shared this view. "After two years of fierce battle, capitalists behind the two firms were tired of burning money with no return. Their only expectation is to see a profitable business and to monetize their investment," it wrote.

But whether their IPO dream can be realized in such a short term is a big question. The firms' merger has triggered a legal war and allegations of manipulation.

On February 16, the tax-booking app Yidao filed suit against Didi and Kuaidi, accusing the two of violating China's anti-

trust laws. It further appealed to the Commerce Department to prohibit their merger.

"Prior their consolidation, Didi and Kuaidi's money was actually amounted to market manipulation. If they are permitted to merge, they will hold the entire industry hostage and strangle any healthy competition," Yidao wrote in its public statement.

Although the government has yet to respond, there is reason to doubt Kuaidi and Didi's merger will be approved, said Liu Zhishuo, a venture capitalist.

"Given that the merged firm will occupy more than 90 percent of the market, the combination threatens the threshold for successors, awards it pricing control and damages consumer interests," Liu said. ■

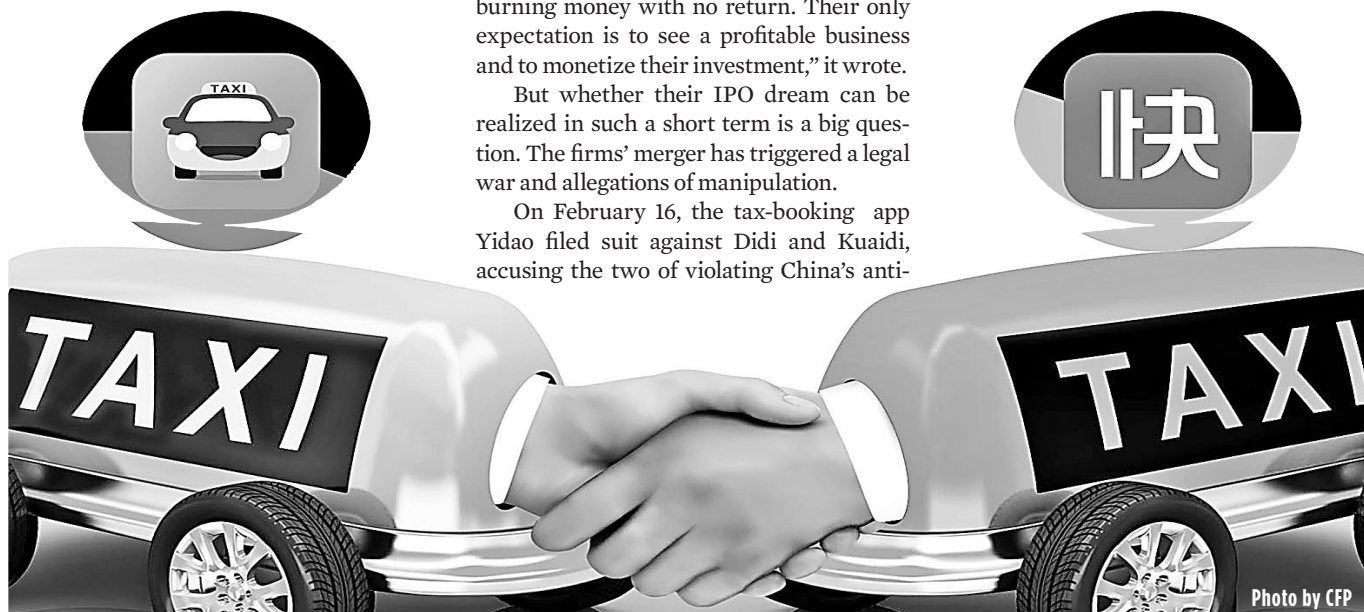


Photo by CFP

## Officials Say Web Fireworks Sales Risky

BY YANG XIN

**B**efore 2015, fireworks were the only Chinese New Year product to escape online trade. The rise of Tencent's WeChat as a sales platform has helped the festive explosives to make the jump.

In the weeks before Chinese New Year, many online businesses such as Aimeii began posting advertisements for fireworks on WeChat Moments.

"I saw some of my friends posting messages about their online fireworks business on WeChat Moments even before the festival. I was surprised to see anyone selling fireworks online," said a WeChat user surnamed Wang.

Aimeii's ad on Moments invited shoppers to browse its stock of fireworks and offered free delivery on large orders. The images turned out to be the inventory of the company's physical stand.

"The online ad mainly targets private buyers within our county, and most of them are our acquaintances. I see no difference between online and offline selling," said a spokesperson for the company who would not be named.

But safety officials worry about the legitimacy of many of the advertisements.

"Fireworks and firecrackers are dangerous goods and cannot be mailed or transported privately. Approval from Public Security Bureau is required for any business that attempts to use or transport fireworks," said Cai Wenjie, a supervisor at the Pro-



Photo by Xinhua Net

duction Safety Administration of Gansu province.

"Legally sold fireworks are registered and marked with identification numbers that allow us to trace where they were made when accidents happen," said the head of the Administration of Work Safety in Urumqi. Fireworks bought online leave customers with no one to hold accountable if tragedy strikes.

But even with online sales, fireworks appear to be declining in popularity as pollution thickens.

Panda Fireworks, which occupies 70 percent of the Beijing fireworks market, saw a 20 percent decline in retail orders during the holiday, Pan Di, the chain's general manager, said.

The shrinking market is forcing merchants to squeeze their prices. Many firework makers cooperated with popular group-buying websites to attract consumers. On the eve of Spring Festival, more than 2,000 users purchased a fireworks coupon through the Nuomi.com group purchase platform.

Yan Zhengbin, deputy chief of the Ministry of Public Security, said licensed firework producers and franchisers who attract consumers to their physical stores using online ads are not violating the law. ■

## THE WEEK IN WEIRD

STRANGE HAPPENINGS ON THE CHINESE NEWS WIRE  
BY SU DERUI

### Woman Kidnapped for Chinese New Year

A 24-year-old woman surnamed Tan was tied up and abducted on February 9 while en route to her job in Dalian's Development District.

The kidnapper, a 32-year-old surnamed Liu, reportedly told Tan he wanted her to return to his hometown for Spring Festival and pose as his wife. Liu said everyone in his family was married and that he felt "psychological pressure."

When Tan never showed up for work or answered calls, her boyfriend notified police. After reviewing surveillance tapes and spotting the kidnapping, police caught up to Tan and Liu on the side of a road.

Tan remained in police custody for the next several days.

(Tencent)

### Chinese Pimp Networks Exposed in Paris

*Le Parisien*, a Paris-based newspaper, reported the city is home to three prostitution networks that involve 200 Chinese women, 20 Chinese-run restaurants and numerous karaoke parlors.

The networks used online classified ads to recruit women as sex workers and employed illegal taxis to transport them to clients. The women posed as students and charged €500 to €800 for sex.

A percent of money paid to their pimps was remitted back to China.

Radio France Internationale reported that most of the networks' clients were Chinese businessmen. Police arrested two of the pimps: an unnamed 28-year-old man and a 25-year-old woman.

(Ifeng)

### Army Says No Promotions for Portly Soldiers

China's fighting men and women have no business sporting generals' bellies, according to new army regulations that take effect this year.

Li Daguang, an army expert at National Defense University, said fat soldiers damage the image of the Chinese military and are ineffective on the battlefield.

Requirements will vary depending on soldiers' duties. Those in administrative roles or employed in offices are expected to be largely exempt.

(Shanghai Daily)

### Feminists Largely Alone in Anti-Gala Rage

A whopping 1,000 of China's more than 600 million netizens have signed an online petition pledging to boycott CCTV's annual Spring Festival Gala for its allegedly misogynistic content.

In an open letter, writers identified 44 performances during this year's program that "mocked" single women, female civil servants and full-time mothers.

The Gala's skits included segments that joked about leftover women, a common term for unmarried women nearing their 30s.

Women may be aware they hold up half the sky, but one of the signatories Zheng Churan told the *Global Times* they remain largely unaware of their rights.

(Ecns.cn)





# Toilet Seat Mania Exposes Made-in-China's Failures

BY LYNNE WANG



**T**he consumption power of Chinese travelers is once again grabbing headlines during the Spring Festival holiday. But instead of luxury watches or baby formulas, it's Japanese toilet seats that have tourists going wild.

The seats, which provide sterilization, warm rinse and massage features, have become the top products on shopping lists, and many tourists are buying two or more seats as gifts for friends and relatives. The toilet seats are typically priced 2,000 yuan before tax.

"They are always out of stock. If we replenish our stock in the morning, everything will be sold out by the afternoon. The Chinese tourists buy everything in only a few hours," said Li Wei, a saleswoman at an appliance shop in Tokyo's Akihabara district.

"Every shop on the street was sold out of toilet seats during Spring Festival," she said.

Apart from toilet seats, tourists also targeted Japanese miniature appliances and household articles such as hair dryers, vacuum cups, electric cookers and ceramic knives.

The gadget obsession has been growing since 2010.

"I think they are built better, and they look delicate and have more user-orientated features," said a tourist who would only be identified by her surname Zhao.

Ironically, it's exactly such products that helped Chinese manufacturers build their reputation for rock bottom prices the past two decades. That Chinese are suddenly shopping for the same products in Japan betrays a staggering crisis of faith.

## Panic Shopping

Growing affluence and a willingness to spend have led much of the world to brand Chinese tourists as walking wallets.

Statistics from the Tourism Department of the State of California show the per capita consumption of Chinese tourists reached \$2,932. Chinese tourists beat out Brazilians, the No. 2 shoppers, by more than \$500 in 2012.

In 2013, Chinese tourists overtook the Indonesians as the biggest spenders in Singapore with per capita consumption of SG\$ 1,136.

China's increasingly wealthy buy whatever they want while abroad to satisfy their suppressed desires for material goods. However, their adoration of foreign products has become a controversy at home.

"It's a national humiliation that China refuses to consume its own products," said Wu Huifang, a Hong Kong judge who ruled on a case of baby formula smuggling on February 6.

Wu said public distrust for domestic products has somehow resulted in the formation of international smuggling rings for a baffling assortment of benign goods.

But it's not entirely hard to understand given the country has been rocked by scandals that involved child-

killing baby formulas and cancer-causing cooking oils.

Business insiders say China's foreign appliances worship fills a different need.

"The demands of Chinese consumers are diversifying. They are no longer satisfied with low-cost and reliable products. They want novelty and durability," said Zhang Qin, a business reporter for *Beijing Youth Daily*.

The rush for Japanese toilet seats reflects how domestic products have failed to keep the pace with consumer demands, Zhang said.

In the meantime, e-commerce and Internet access have strengthened consumers' search for individualized and diverse products, said Ding Yang, an analyst at Tencent.

## The Made-in-China Model

In front of increasingly mature and picky consumers, Chinese manufacturers have to accept that their advantages are disappearing as costs rise and innovation remains stagnant.

Data from the US-China Chamber of Commerce show that 61 percent of enterprises in China regarded rising labor costs as their most urgent challenge in 2015. Boston Consulting Group shared the view and said Chinese manufacturers will entirely lose their advantage within five years.

"The Made-in-China miracle depends on an incredible advantage in raw material costs, taxes and labor. But the steady erosion of all three is leaving Chinese manufacturers in a bad situation, and the low prices are decreasingly attractive to domestic shoppers," said Wu Xiaobo, a financial writer in Hangzhou.

While Chinese manufacturers have been attempting to swap technology to catch up, that shortcut ignores their fundamental shortcomings in innovation and brand development, Wu said.

This is especially true for domestic appliance vendors.

Chinese small appliance firms like Haier and Midea have attempted to cooperate with Sanyo and Panasonic since the 1990s. Known for their outstanding imitative ability and low-price marketing, the domestic vendors quickly grabbed market share.

But the Japanese companies, realizing it was impossible to compete on price, focused instead on cultivating high-end clients and loyal users. The firms have also slowed the export of their core technologies to Chinese rivals and have suspended many of their China operations.

"China's manufacturers can hardly copy American-style innovation that is focused on breaking new ground. The more realistic path is for them to enhance efficiency and improve the quality of China's existing manufacturing industry. Only in this way will the industry find its confidence and regain the trust of native residents," said Zhu Haibing, chief economist for JP Morgan in Greater China. ■

Photos by gting.com & unwire.hk



# Li Ning's Woes a Valuable Lesson in Branding

BY LI RUQI

## 2014

was not kind to Li Ning. The famous sports brand founded by China's favorite

Olympic gymnast posted losses of 5.8 trillion yuan and shuttered 1,200 outlets.

And that was while domestic competitors Anta, 361, Peak and Tread all turned a profit.

Last month, the company announced its sales growth was positive during the July-December period. However, it still expects a third year of net losses as it wades through restructuring, bloated inventory and reduced demand.

The brand launched in 2003 and enjoyed a rocketing growth rate of 34.9 percent in its first six years. It benefitted from a marketing plan that pushed it to its peak during the 2008 Beijing Olympics. By the next year, Li Ning was bigger than Adidas in China.

"Our success owes much to the booming economic situation of those years. Sales were buoyed by increasing consumption, and that helped to conceal many problems within," said a former Li Ning senior executive who spoke on conditions of anonymity.

### Marketing Failure

With "Linsanity" on the lips of NBA fans around the world, Li Ning hurled \$100 million at a 10-year contract with Dwyane Wade of the Miami Heat and allowed Jeremy Lin to be snatched up by Adidas.

Similarly, Li Ning missed the chance to sign the Guangzhou Evergrande Football Club, which was later signed by Nike.

"Jeremy Lin continued the story of Chinese athletes taking the world stage generation by generation. An endorsement from Lin would have helped the domestic sports brand to enter the global market," said Li Jianhua, a writer for Sina Finance.

But Li Ning's epic failure goes beyond a missed endorsement.

As China's most recognized domestic sports brand, Li Ning failed to transform the personal charm of its sports stars into a component of its brand image. Expensive contracts with superstars such as Shaquille O'Neal and Yelena Isinbayeva became mere seasonal gimmicks that failed to contribute to the brand.

"Real marketing should influence consumers' behavior. In this, we failed," a spokesman for the company said.

### Diluted Brand

Li Ning was once a symbol of the Chinese national squad in the 1990s, when the company sponsored the national diving team, national gymnastics team and national table tennis team.

Li Ning himself brought great ath-

letic honor to the nation, and the brand was blessed with a proud patriotic lineage that set it apart from its domestic peers.

But in the following 20 years, Li Ning began to explore the overseas market by sponsoring foreign national squads and changing its target consumers to teens in 2010.

"90s Li Ning," the latest attempt at rebranding the company, was considered to be a disaster that cost it many old consumers and failed to hook young buyers. The drop in demand left Li Ning to keep selling old stock at steep discounts.

For anyone keen to look, Li Ning showed all signs of a brand in an identity crisis.

Eager to woo a new generation of young buyers, Li Ning waffled between professional and fashion sportswear and even changed its logo. The indecision and poor planning left it a mediocre brand with no featured product.

Anta, by contrast, aimed at the mid- to low-end market and focused on producing good quality basketball, track and cross-country shoes. Ding Shizhong, CEO of Anta, said the company earned 1.7 billion yuan in 2014 and became the first domestic sportswear firm without old stock.

### Wholesale to Retail

As the top-selling domestic sportswear maker in 2014, Anta changed its model from wholesale to retail.

In order to raise the unit efficiency of each store, Anta analyzed how fast products were sold at each outlet and began organizing its shipments in a way that would optimize resources.

"In wholesale models, all information is provided by the suppliers. You can never ascertain the real needs of the market based on which goods remain in stock," Li Ning said.

Zheng Jie, the executive officer of Anta, said the company has been relying on e-commerce over Alibaba's T-mall to clear out seasonal stock.

"We may release something special in our children's line for online retail this year, but our physical stores will remain the main sales channel," Zheng said.

She said e-commerce sales are expected to account for less than 20 percent of the brand's revenue this year.

On December 2014, Li Ning began selling its shares again at a low price in hopes of raising the 1.5 billion yuan it needs to break even. The company is closing more of its stores and returning to professional sportswear.

But with its brand in shambles and its Olympic namesake relegated to the memory of an aging generation, it's hard to say whether retreating into its glory days will be enough to save Li Ning. ■

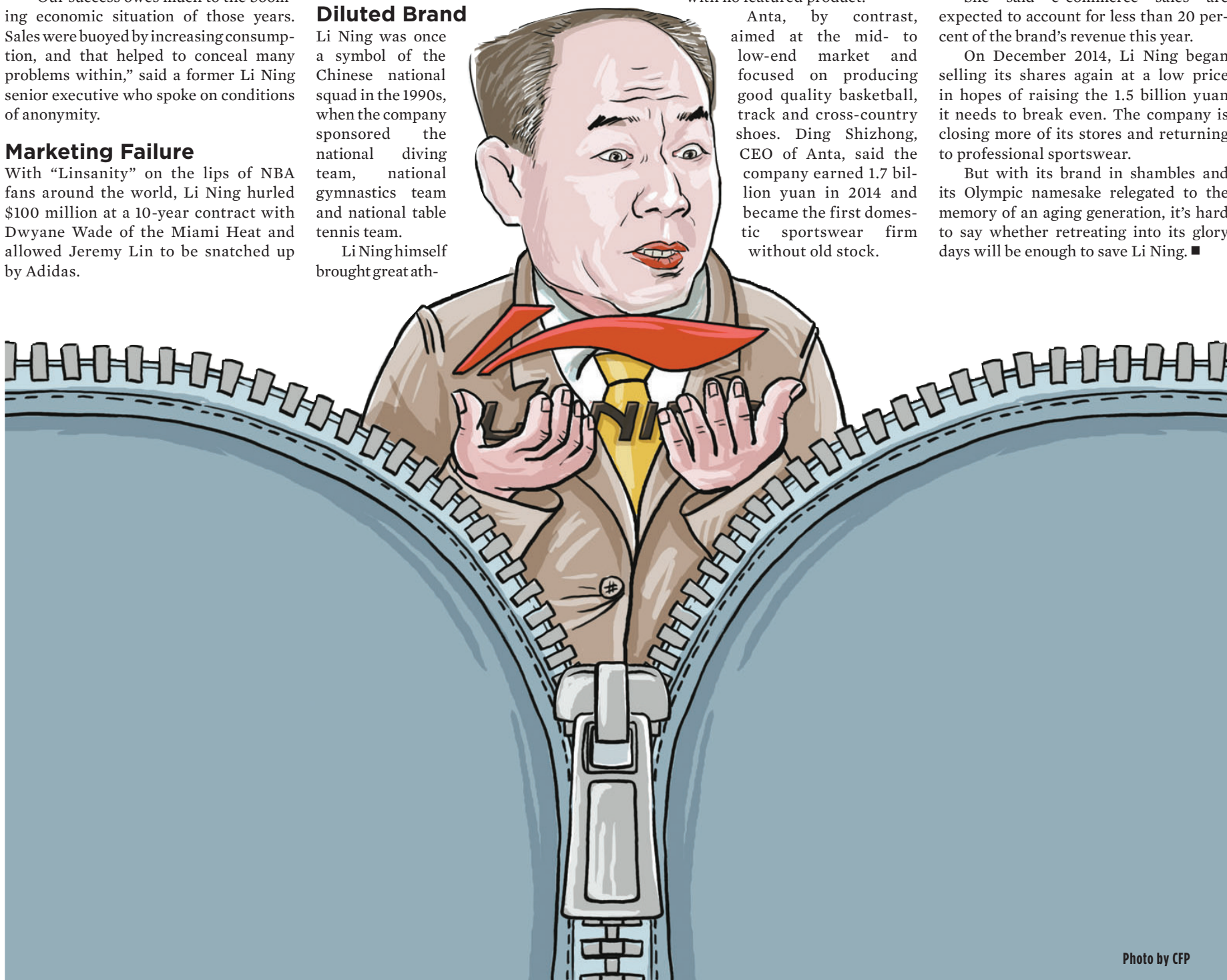


Photo by CFP





Photo by takungpao

# Hukou Woes Behind Hebei's 'Migratory Bird' Phenomenon

BY YANG XIN

For passengers on Trains Y502 or 1487 from Hengshui, Hebei province to Beijing West Station, the sight of uniformed school children is too common. Most of the students are enrolled in one of China's legendary "education factories."

To outsiders, the boys and girls are known as "migratory birds."

Each trip between their schools and parents' temporary residences in Beijing involves a migration of 274 kilometers. A teacher who has been supervising the trips said the 800 students require eight dedicated cars on each train.

But for the parents, many of whom are part of the capital's working poor, the 3-hour commute is excruciating.

## Anything for Education

Parents of students in Hengshui include vendors living in shabby bungalows and higher-paid business owners who have acquired cars, homes and debt.

But regardless of their fortunes and social status, all share a common dilemma. Most work from dawn to dusk and have no time to spend with their children. Without a Beijing hukou, their children are locked out of the capital's public school system.

It's a sad situation for a class that has learned the hard way to value education above all else.

"Who would want to be separated from his or her own child? But without a Beijing hukou, it's almost impossible to get my child into a local school. More importantly, without a hukou, my child cannot take the college entrance exam here," said Liu Jian-



Photos by Beijing Youth Daily



Separation from one's parents is a common headache for "migratory birds."

zhe, the mother of a Hengshui student.

Liu's words describe the situation faced by every migrant with school-age children. Even those who study at one of the capital's elementary schools for migrant children can never acquire the necessary papers to continue their education at middle school or beyond.

Forced to choose between an early end to their children's "compulsory" education and separation, most opt to send their children to schools in Hengshui.

The city's reputation as an education



Photo by uschinapress

The 274-kilometer trip is unavoidable for those seeking a place in China's education factory.

factory is another draw.

In 2014, more than a third of the top 1,000 high school graduates in Hebei province came from Hengshui High School; nearly 87 percent of the school's graduates were accepted in the first round of college and university admission.

Yingcai School of Hengshui is a private boarding school established in 1996 for students who are locked out of public elementary schools and for leftover children. Since 1998, it has been admitting the children of Beijing's migrants. It enrolled 30 students in its first year, and by 2002 that figure swelled to 200.

Today, more than 1,000 of Beijing's migrant families send their children to study at Yingcai. Two more boarding schools have opened in the city to support the growing demand.

## Stranded by the City

Urbanization is a problem for most developing countries, but China's population restrictions add a new layer of hidden consequences.

The Beijing Population Research Institute said more than 5 million migrant workers flocked to the city during the first 12 years of this century. To put that in perspective, it means one in every three Beijingers is a non-native.

Few are ever able to acquire a Beijing hukou.

The growing migrant population exposes a striking shortcoming in Beijing's education resources. The group

includes nearly half a million school age children who are being denied access to public education.

The shadowy "migrant school" industry, although well meaning, leaves most decidedly disadvantaged.

NGOs active in Beijing's migrant school industry estimate that as many as 60,000 migrant children do not possess legal education papers. In Chaoyang District alone, there are 19 migrant schools operating without national approval.

"These schools are not approved by the Ministry of Education and have to walk on the fringes of national law. It's not really the schools' fault. They are just the consequence of insufficient support from our national education resources," said Xiong Bingqi, vice president of 21st Century Education Research Institute.

"Every student who is in compulsory education is supposed to be given a school roll. The paperwork is designed to prevent kids from dropping out. But the children of migrant workers are not given any way to transfer their school rolls to their current residence," Xiong said.

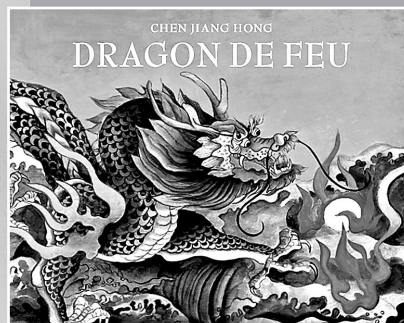
In Shanghai, all schools for migrant children are recognized by the government and issued the paperwork needed to process student rolls. Beijing has not made the education rights of its migrants a priority.

"The local government should be more proactive in evaluating Beijing's migrants schools and either granting them approval or closing their doors," Xiong said. ■



# Croisements Festival Preps for 10th Year of Exchange

BY YANG XIN



Photos by the French Embassy in Beijing

**C**roisements Festival, the biggest French cultural event in the world, held its New Year preview presentation on February 10 at the old Sino-French University.

Found in 2006, Croisements Festival is an annual cultural exchange event. Known as the largest French cultural festival and the largest foreign cultural festival in China, the festival has attracted the attention of professionals.

The event has helped more than 8 million spectators to connect with French culture during the last decade.

To celebrate its 10th anniversary, the 2015 Croisements Festival promises an intense, popular, innovative and prestigious anniversary program.

From April 10 to July 10, it will play host to 100 events in more than 20 Chinese cities including Beijing, Shenyang, Shanghai, Guangzhou, Chengdu and Wuhan. Events will encompass 10 artistic disciplines such as visual arts, architecture and design, new media, classical and contemporary music, jazz and modern music, dance, theatre, contemporary circus and street art, cinema and literature.

Visual art plays a significant role in this year's festival. Twenty or so important contemporary artists from both France and China will be united for

an exhibition on the theme of light – its shadow, its power and its melancholy – to celebrate UNESCO's International Year of light.

Architecture and design are expected to appear at the festival for the first time alongside French cooking and banqueting art. Founders and experts of traditional French table arts will share their thoughts on French food and art.

Introduced at last year's festival, the literature and activities for children have won applause and will continue as a link between the countries' younger generations. Some legendary French children's publisher will be introduced to China through workshops, meetings with authors and illustrators and exhibitions.

According to the French Embassy in Beijing, transnational exchanges in fashion are also expected in the near future.

"As our two countries further exchange culture, we are putting more emphasis on innovation and creativity while preparing for the festival," said Anthony Chaumuzeau, counselor for culture and cooperation at the French embassy.

"It has become an indispensable platform of cultural exchange and shows the best of our two countries to people of all ages." ■



Photo by CFP

## Japan Returns to Tourists' Spring Festival Itineraries

BY YANG XIN

**A**bout 60 percent of the Chinese who plan to travel during Spring Festival head abroad, according to a recent survey by *Beijing Daily*. One of the top holiday destinations is Japan.

The Japanese Embassy in China said it released 250,000 visas in January, an all time high.

The easing of visa application requirements for private tourists in January was largely effective. Japan extended the validity of its three-year multiple-entry visas to five years for high-income Chinese visitors and allowed tourists unrestricted travel throughout the country.

For visitors who made a previous short visit to Japan during the last three years, their economic status when applying for a three-year multiple-entry visa was adjusted from sufficient to certain.

"The new visa policy allows more Chinese to visit Japan without restrictions. With multiple-entry visas, they can start an independent tour whenever they want, enjoy delicious cuisine, go on shopping sprees and enjoy its famous hot springs," said Hideki Ijichi, chief representative of the Japan National Tourism Organization's Beijing office.

Chinese travel agencies are confident that the depreciation of the yen in recent months will further boost the Japanese tourism market. In November last year, it fell to a seven-year low against the US dollar.

"The devaluation of the yen makes travel cost lower and Japanese goods cheaper. In the beginning of 2014, 10,000 Japanese yen equaled about 800 yuan, but it is closer to 500 yuan now," said Rao Tian, deputy general manager of the Overseas Tourism Department at China International Travel Service Office. ■

## Brush Artists Pen Couplets for Embassy Staff

BY YANG XIN

**"W**rite Spring Festival couplets on the 24th" is a proverb and rule of northern Chinese society. On the 24th day of the 12th lunar month, casual calligraphers around the country bust out their



Photo by Pan Chuanxian via sina blog

brushes to write verses for festival decor.

On February 12, the Beijing Branch of the Chinese Calligraphers Association and Chinese Calligraphy Institute organized their first "New Year Blessing into the Embassies in Beijing," an activity to spread the art of couplet writing to the city's embassy community.

More than 20 skilled calligraphers were invited to write Spring Festival couplets at the event. Their work was presented as gifts to more than 40 envoys from the embassies. A total of 50 couplets were written during the activity.

The visiting ambassadors said they were excited about the activity.

"I was quite impressed by the brilliant live performances of the Chinese calligraphers. It reminds me that we should spare no effort to preserve China's classic calligraphy culture," said Carmensa Jaramillo, Colombia's ambassador to China.

"Cultural exchanges are no longer about creating political or economic and trade links between nations. Instead, they have become a crucial part of cross-

national friendship," said Gertrude Vaape, Zambia's ambassador to China.

Guillermo Jorge Chalup Liendo, Bolivia's Ambassador to China, said he hoped more people around the world would learn to see China as a cultural giant as well as an economic power. "Each brushstroke the calligraphers made was the result of their years of continuous effort. Their perseverance deserves to be admired by people worldwide," he said.

Zhang Jie, president of Chinese Calligraphy Institute, said the activity was part of the country's new effort at --\*0people-to-people diplomacy. By combining Spring Festival couplet culture and calligraphy with diplomacy, more ordinary people have the chance to experience traditional culture. ■



# Face Beijing Offers Silk Road Warmth in a Modern Hotel



**F**ace Beijing is a boutique hotel with 16 rooms, a bar and two dining rooms. Opened in June 2010, the hotel is modeled on the ancient inns of the Silk Road that served pilgrims and merchants from a multitude of countries.

Unlike its competitors, Face Beijing has an amazing collection of Asian art and ornaments, as well as Buddhist decorations from India, Indonesia, Bali, Java and Thailand. It's a place where cultures and lifestyles can mingle as they did in the past, and where contemporary leisure facilities blend with Asian decor.

Guests who enter are immersed in the hotel's warm and friendly oasis culture that attempts to capture the spirit of Silk Road travel.

At Face Beijing, travelers and traders can meet to socialize and develop relationships and friendships. It's

also a nice destination for romantic rendezvous.

Face Lounge is the best place for guests seeking a great time with friends or business partners. Comfortable China-style beds and India-style windows and doors beautify the lounge. In the afternoon, guests can enjoy soft music, delicate desserts and English or Thai tea. Thai and Indian snacks are available in the evening.

Face Beijing has two unique dining rooms: Lan Na Thai and Hazara.

Lan Na Thai is a Thai-style dining room. "Lan Na" means "a world being abundant in grains" in Thai, and it is also the name of the country's northern region. Thai chefs prepare amazing green papaya salad, mango sticky rice, curried crab and other delicacies.

The Indian dining room Hazara brings together the food and drink of northern India, including healthy



rustic diets and luxurious urban food. For guests who want to eat native Indian food, Hazara is definitely the best choice. The food and Indian-style decor creates a characteristic India experience for guests.

Face Beijing is a branch of Face Asia, a project of English designer Frank Duleek and the owner Heidi. Face Asia operates hotels in Beijing, Shanghai, Thailand and Indonesia. The luxurious restaurants of Face Asia provide guests with Thai, Indian, Chinese, Japanese and Moroccan delicacies. Guests can also go to its SPA fitness centers or French dessert rooms to spend a pleasant day.

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(By Shu Pengqian)

## BEIJING TODAY eDigest | 《今日北京》电子文摘

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